

## Eccentric, realist, populist, procedural (Berlin, 18–19 May 18)

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Dorotheenstraße 26, 10117 Berlin, Hörsaal 207, May 18–19, 2018

Larne Abse Gogarty, Institut für Kunst- und Bilgeschichte

Eccentric, realist, populist, procedural: the politics of figuration in American Art 1929-1980.

This event is free of charge and requires no registration.

This conference addresses figuration in American art as a broad tendency that encompasses representational approaches as well as artworks that are underpinned by the human figure in a procedural sense, even where the body might appear obscure or highly mediated. Through the periodisation of this conference, the aim is to address figuration in relation to various flashpoints of social crisis in the United States, beginning with the impetus towards realism and its variants during the Depression, and then traversing towards the mid-century moment when American abstract art gained global prominence at the onset of the Cold War. Despite marking an apparent erasure of the figure, we know that non-representational artworks continued to be read in relation to the body in the 1950s-1960s, whether positively as in Harold Rosenberg's analysis of action painting, or negatively as in Michael Fried's accusations of a lurking anthropomorphism within minimalist sculpture. Through the 1960s and 1970s, the figure persisted in a whole range of painting, sculpture and performance practices which went beyond a strictly representational or realist paradigm and instead sought out mimetic and/or mediated ways of approaching the figure. This conference explores these issues in relation to the various struggles over who counts as human during the period. How did figuration act as a means to humanise, or conversely de-humanise individuals and social groups? How has representation of the human figure frequently been situated as a responsibility to bear, or conversely, a burden to shed, within struggles around race, class, sexuality and gender in the United States?

Programme:

Friday 18th May

17.00 Welcome: Charlotte Klonk (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

17.15 Introduction: Larne Abse Gogarty (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

Keynote lecture

17.30 Andrew Hemingway (Professor Emeritus, University College London) "'The subject can take sides, not the quality' (Jean Hélion, 1938): Anti-Stalinism and Abstract Painting in the Late 1930s"

Respondent: Kerstin Stakemeier (Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Nuremberg)

18.30-19.00 Discussion

19.00-20.00 Drinks reception.

Saturday 19th May

Panel 1: The figure, race and the nation

Chair: Larne Abse Gogarty

10.00 Anne Monahan (Fashion Institute of Technology) "Horace Pippin, Labor, and Cotton"

10.20 Joanne Crawford (University of Leeds) "The Figure in Waiting: Abstract Expressionism and the suspension of the 'revolutionary moment' (1952)"

10.40 Respondent: Selamawit Terrefe (Universität Bremen)

11.00 Discussion

11.30 Coffee

Panel 2: Biology, the networked body and eroticism

Respondent and chair: Jenny Nachtigall (Akademie der Bildenden Künste, München)

12.00 Eva Ehninger (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) "Against the Biological Metaphor: Robert Smithson's Crystalline Figuration"

12.20 Helene Viltalta (University College London) "Lee Lozano and the Networked Body"

12.40 James Boaden "The Body, the Figure, and the Self in Hannah Wilke and Vito Acconci"

13.00 Discussion

13.30 Lunch

Panel 3: Tactility, materiality and humanism

Respondent and chair: Jordan Troeller

14.30 Lauren Kroiz „Harold Cousins and Plaiton Sculpture“

14.50 Paisid Aramphongphan "Paul Thek: Body Mass Index"

15.10 Emilia Terraciano "Let's twist again: the anthropomorphic sculptures of Senga Nengudi"

15.30 Discussion

16.00 Coffee break

Keynote lecture

16.30 Darby English, "Making a Body American"

Respondent and chair: Larne Abse Gogarty

17.30-18.00 Questions and closing discussion.

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